

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01

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SUBJ: SOVIET PRESS CRITICIZES U.S. ON ME

REF: MOSCOW 13462

1. SUMMARY: REACTION TO U.S. MILITARY ALERT HAS BROUGHT STRONGEST AND MOST DIRECT CRITICISM OF U.S. AND PRESIDENT IN SOVIET MEDIA SINCE DECEMBER 1972 BOMBING OF VIETNAM. IN ADDITION TO TASS STATEMENT ON U.S. ALERT (REFTEL), WEEKEND PRESS REPORTS NEGATIVELY PRESIDENT'S JUSTIFICATION OF ALERT WHILE ALSO REPORTING HIS COMMENTS ON U.S.-SOVIET EFFORTS TO SOLVE CRISIS. PRESS QUOTES CHARGES THAT U.S. ALERT WAS "IRRESPONSIBLE AND ADVENTURIST", AND ALSO SUGGESTS THAT ALERT MAY HAVE BEEN MOTIVATED BY U.S. DOMESTIC CRISIS. OTHER STORIES STRESS NEGATIVE REACTION BY WEST EUROPEAN ALLIES TO U.S. ALERT AND U.S. "PRO-ISRAELI" POLICY. END SUMMARY.

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2. TASS REPORT ON PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE (PRAVDA

OCTOBER 28) GIVES FAIRLY STRAIGHTFORWARD TREATMENT TO STATEMENT THAT SOVIET AND U.S. ACTIONS DURING ME WAR HAVE AVOIDED U.S.-SOVIET CONFRONTATION IN ME AND HAVE IMPROVED CHANCES FOR PEACE IN REGION. STORY TAKES CRITICAL TONE, HOWEVER, ON PRESIDENT'S DISCUSSION OF U.S. MILITARY ALERT. ARTICLE SASYS PRESIDENT, REFERRING TO INFORMATION FROM UNIDENTIFIED SOURCE, TRIED TO JUSTIFY ACTION DESPITE FACT THAT IT WAS INCONSISTENT WITH DETENTE "TOWARD WHICH ACCORDING TO R. NIXON THE U.S. IS STRIVING." REPORT ADDS THAT PRESIDENT RECEIVED SHARP QUESTIONS ON WATERGATE AND DECLARED THAT HE WOULD CONTINUE TO DISCHARGE HIS OBLIGATIONS AS PRESIDENT.

3. PRAVDA (OCTOBER 29) CARRIES TASS ITEM ON SPEECH BY ITALIAN CP LEADER BERLINGUER CRITIZCING U.S. ALERT AND ASSERTING ACTION WAS "IRRESPONSBILE AND ADVENTURIST." UNDER HEADLINE "JUSTIFIED SKEPTICISM," ANOTHER TASS ITEM CITES JAMES RESTON AND GUADDIAN ARTICLES TO SUGGEST THAT ALERT RESULTED FROM ADMINISTRATION'S NEED TO DIVERT U.S. ATTENTION FROM DOMESTIC CRISIS TO ME.

4. ANOTHER THEME OF PRESS REPORTS IS EMERGENCE OF GROWING TENSION BETWEEN U.S. AND ITS EUROPEAN ALLIES OVER ME POLICY. OCTOBER 28 PRAVDA CARRIES TASS ITEMS REPORTING MCCLOSKEY STATEMENT ON NATO RESPONSE TO U.S. SUPPORT OF ISRAEL AND STORIES CITING FOREIGN PRESS REPORTS OF CRITICISM OF U.S. ALERT BY EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS. IN SAME VEIN, PRAVDA COMMENTARY (PERESADA) OCTOBER 29 SAYS OIL ISSUE IS NOW NOT ONLY AN ECONOMIC PROBLEM BUT HAS BECOME A POLITICAL PROBLEM DIVIDING U.S. AND WEST EUROPEANS OVER ME POLICY.

DUBS

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